

LONG ISLAND FORUM



FAMILY OF MALLARDS

Photo by Edwin Way Teale, Eminent Author on Nature Subjects
Reprinted From Bailey's Three Volume Long Island History

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MARCH, 1950

Those Black Squirrels

In reference to the black squirrels mentioned on page 22 in the February, 1950, Long Island Forum. These black squirrels are a melanistic phase of our common gray species. This dark phase occurs more commonly in New England than on Long Island. On our island they have been recorded rarely in the past, but they have appeared more frequently in recent years. I have seen them in East Hampton and Southampton in addition to the localities given in the Forum.

Roy Latham, Orient.

Mr. Latham, curator of Orient's marine museum, knows the island's wild life as well as its archaeology.

✱ ✱ ✱

Hampton Holly Tree's Age

Here is a note on the age of the famous Holly Tree at Southampton. In an unsigned note in a copy of part of the Daniel Hildreth diary I found the following comment on the tree:

"December, 1933, Miss Carrie Dimon told me her father, Mr. L. C. Dimon, said when he moved here from Easthampton in 1823 the Holly Tree was growing out here near the corner then, so it is 110 years old (1933). Daniel Hildreth the 3rd (the diarist), who died in 1881 aged 81, said it had looked the same about as long as he could remember."

He had a good memory for events as far back as 1810. If the tree seemed as big then as it did in 1880 it was probably at least 50 years older. That takes it back close to the time when that part of Southampton was first cleared of the original forest of which it is quite possible the Holly Tree was a part. If so it was probably big enough then to attract notice and to be preserved. Be that as it may it is certain the Holly Tree is at least 150 years old to-day. And it is still strong and vital. The great hurricane of '38 did it some damage but the Tree made a good recovery. Ernest S. Clowes, Bridgehampton

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Southhold's Custer Institute

AT the eastern end of Long Island, between Long Island Sound and Peconic Bay, there is Southhold, founded in 1640. At the time of its tercentenary celebration in 1940, amidst the recollection and reverence of the past, a dedication took place which pointed the way toward the scientifically cultural future of the village and township. The home of Custer Institute for Scientific Research was dedicated to "the purpose of increasing interest in scientific developments and disseminating the findings of research to its community." New York State had given it a charter as an educational institution. A solid, small brick building of two rooms and a cellar had been built by the hands of the members themselves, to house that which had been growing from a seed of beginning in 1923-26.

In the years of the 1920's, first one, then two, then three and four men of the village sought out Charles W. Elmer, one of the foremost amateur astronomers of the country, eager to have discussions with him on astronomy and to experiment with astrophotography. In Mr. Elmer's Cedar Beach, Southhold home the discussions were held, alive with vigorous thought, questioning, searching for truth. From the outset, each man had his individual contribution to make, his individual queries to ask. Charles Elmer's stimulating mind, vision and knowledge of the stars drew the best out of each one. Little did those men think at that time that they were the initial start of an institution unique in the annals of scientific progress within a small country village.

The group increased. Men whose business had to do with the professions, with trades, with shops, with farms, had

By Ann Hallock Currie-Bell

or wanted interests and hobbies for their leisure time. Scientific subjects of various sorts were added to the agenda of talk. Visitors from important astronomical strongholds and from scientific laboratories occasionally came to join the discussions, adding zest to the meetings.

funds filled the treasury; small dues of the members were all that could be counted on. The Elmer home, telescopes and the Elmers nourished the first years.

Numbers again increased. The intimate, upstairs room in the polar observatory house became too small. The Universalist Church offered its parish house. This was used



CUSTER INSTITUTE FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

That loosely formed little group soon held the respect of such institutions as Mt. Wilson and the Harvard College Observatory. In fact it was the astro-graphic plates of stellar images made by one of the group in those years which were used by the Harvard Observatory.

The meetings took on more and more regularity and there was the eventual need for organization. When accomplished, it was named Custer Institute in honor of the gracious lady who had so often given hospitality and inspiration to the gatherings in the Cedar Beach home—May Custer Elmer, wife of Charles Elmer, and descendant of the distinguished family of Custer. At the beginning no

until further expansion, determination, and hard work brought about the dreamed of home for scientific research. The cornerstone was laid in 1938, the building dedicated in 1940.

But expansion, a necessary part of scientific progress, again demanded more facilities and space. In 1945-47 an entire new wing, library and observatory were added to Custer Institute's home. They were formally dedicated, August 30, 1947, as the John W. Stokes Memorial Hall, the Charles W. Elmer Library and the May Custer Elmer Observatory. Months and months of planning and manual labor by the members, plus financial help from themselves and the

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Forum

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Indians Relics Display

A display of Indian relics from various sections of Long Island, is now being shown at the Tackapausha Museum, Sunrise highway, Seaford. All four counties of the island are represented in the collection which is loaned by John O'Halloran, Brooklyn archaeologist and student of Indian life.

Other institutions desirous of obtaining the exhibition and having closed showcases in which items may be kept should address Mr. O'Halloran, 338 Prospect Avenue, Brooklyn 15.

* * *

Washington at Greenport

Mr. Leslie Elhoff's story of Washington on Long Island in the February Forum clears up something that has confused me for a long time. When I lived in Greenport fifty-seven years ago there was no monument marking the site of the Booth Inn. On one of my visits to Greenport in recent years I walked over to the boulder near the Presbyterian Church and read the inscription on the brass tablet, carefully noting the date, because at that time I was somewhat suspicious of its authenticity.

As soon as possible after that I looked in all the biographies of Washington and it was some time before I found just the merest hint that he had gone through Long Island on his way to Boston, in the year named in the inscription. Mr. Elhoff makes it clear that he only returned that way. I am looking forward with a great deal of interest to the continuation of his story.

I am also very glad to read that the Forum is to be preserved by the microfilm process, and only wish that many of our local newspapers could have been preserved the same way, for there is much valuable local history in those old papers that are rapidly disintegrating in our public libraries.

John Tooker,
Babylon

* * *

Long Island Forum Index

A bound index of more than forty pages of material to cover the first ten years of the Long Island Forum has been made available by the Long Island Collection, Queens Borough Public Library, 89-14 Parsons Boulevard, Jamaica 2, N. Y. Multigraphed and reproduced by offset, the forty-odd pages have been bound in durable covers, all strongly stapled to withstand frequent use. To procure a copy, one should order direct, remitting

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Eel Grass Comes Back

ONE Sunday last summer my daughter came in from a day on the bay. She had fixed up a lunch, and gone with a young fellow to Fire Island in his speedboat. His boat is the kind that planes—touches the water only at the tail when fully underway. He skims across sandbars which would ordinarily ground a flat-bottom rowboat!

The trip to and from Fire Island had been highlighted by four stops to clear the propeller of eel grass. These four inconveniences brought the fact home to me that eel grass had returned to our bay.

The disappearance and return of eel grass constitutes one of the most interesting and amazing biological phenomena of modern times.

Eel grass is an aquatic plant. It roots in the mud and sand where the depth of water does not exceed ten feet. The long, half-inch-wide leaves reach upward to the surface in a dense, underwater forest. The leaves are slippery and wave or sway in the motion of the tide.

The flower blooms under water, fertilization takes place there as well as the development and maturing of the seed. Eel grass also reproduces asexually by division. Parts of the individual plants break off, rise to the surface and float away in slicks to sink on a new home site. The slicks of grass often cover an acre or more as they drift along on the water.

Oystermen, in planting their crop, have always kept away from flats infested with eel grass. When the tide goes out the grass rests on the flat in a thick, heavy mat. The pressure and bulk hinders oysters in the normal functionings of feeding and breathing, and quickly smothers them out.

At the turn of the century propeller-driven pleasure craft made their appearance,

By Julian Denton Smith

It became immediately evident that something had to be done to prevent eel grass from clogging and jamming the propellers. The Columbian Bronze Corp., located at Freeport, Long Island, invented and manufactured the Weedless Wheel, a propeller that turned outward so as to throw off obstructions in the water. It won instant popularity.

stuffing for upholstery, heat insulation in and around buildings, and a soil enricher and binder.

Its greatest use has been one which benefits man indirectly. Brant duck feed on it; it constitutes as high as 80% of their normal diet (some authorities estimate the figure at 88%). Geese and black duck also eat considerable of the grass. Small shellfish, small fish, and many minute forms



EEL GRASS USE TO ACCUMULATE HERE

During the two wars propellers of the Weedless Wheel type have been successfully used on all invasion craft likely to encounter floating matter of any sort. While the Weedless Wheel was invented to overcome eel grass, it did a tremendous part in winning both World War I and II.

Except for seasonal shortages the salty waters of Long Island have always produced vast quantities of eel grass. From the time of the earliest settlers it has been used as bedding for domestic animals,

of salt-water life depend upon eel grass for shelter and feeding ground.

Suddenly in 1931 eel grass began to sicken, waste, and to die—leaf, stem and roots. By the end of summer 1932 it had gone, disappeared, vanished! This was not a local disaster but struck practically all the eel grass on the east and west shores of the North Atlantic, the Bay of Biscay, and the Mediterranean Sea.

Many of our prominent botanists and plant-disease men are agreed that we may never

know *exactly* what caused this catastrophe. However, one fungus disease, *Labyrinthula* (Wasting Disease), seemed to be always present in dying eel grass. Now, whenever mention is made of the eel grass destruction, *Labyrinthula* has become automatically associated with the occurrence. The wasting disease surely accounted for an extremely large proportion of the destruction, if not for all of it.

In an effort to restock the waters eel grass was flown into Pamlico Sound, North Carolina, from the Pacific hoping there existed enough structural difference in the grasses that the western grass might not be susceptible to the disease running wild on the east coast. The Pacific grass did not survive. The disease, incidentally, spread around to the Pacific Ocean but failed to raise the havoc there that accompanied it in the North Atlantic.

With the disappearance of eel grass the brant duck population approached the vanishing point. Sportsmen everywhere witness the poor gunning which has followed the lack of the grass. In an effort to protect the few migratory brant which continue to frequent our waters, the game laws were altered to shorten the season and to reduce the take.

Scallops vanished from our bay at about the same time as the eel grass. Now they are being found here once more. Scallops are handicapped in locomotive ability. They move through the water by forcing open the two shells and then squeezing them together. When the water is rough, as during a storm, the scallops are helpless and are cast ashore or washed out to sea unless they can grasp something and anchor down. Eel grass was the 'something' they clung to by clasping it between the two shells. Apparently with eel grass gone—nothing to hang to—the scallops went, too.

In 1938 many reports were published stating that eel

grass was returning. These reports came from New Jersey, Massachusetts, James Bay, England, France, and the north coast of Africa. Everywhere the increase seemed to be a spreading out from the old eel grass which had suffered slight injury in the great destruction. The old, surviving growth was confined to water of low salinity—that at mouths of rivers and streams, or in the vicinity of freshwater springs.

The 1938 return failed to be permanent. In most sections it, too, became diseased and died. Again the *Labrynthula* fungus was present. For several seasons thereafter the growth of eel grass appeared to expand only to have the disease beat it back to the locations of low-salinity water.

Each year sees more and more eel grass in the Great

South Bay. It is again covering most of the shoal water up under the outer beach. No doubt the return has been from the easterly end of the bay and very likely at present does not extend beyond Babylon in its westward advance.

A little of the eel grass will be most beneficial for shellfish, small fish, ducks and humans, but I think we can get along without a bayful, like it was a generation ago!

About 1910 our family visited my father's cousin at his bungalow on Point Lookout. He owned a naphtha launch and met us at Woodcleft Canal in south Freeport. My father went overboard six times clearing the propeller of eel grass before we tied up at the Point Lookout dock. That was thick eel grass! And my youngster kicked about four cloggings on a Wantagh-Fire Island roundtrip!

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C. A. Woehning

I Wander Among Old Records

THIS TIME I am going to wander through records of old documents, as one might walk along the sea shore picking up here a bright pebble, there a shiny shell.

They were wise people with an eye to conservation when in the year 1660 the Town of Oyster Bay ordered that "every inhabitant shall procure or cause to be procured one bushell of hayseed to be sowne upon the common in the space of one year after coming in to be an inhabitante."

No clapboards or pipestave trees should be cut for the use of anyone outside the Town. Fences for cattle must be four or four and a half feet high. If the fence viewers found a fence in bad shape, they gave the owner three days to fix it; if not done in that time they pulled it down and the owner had to build it up. I guess he fixed it in time!

The gentlemen who signed the following paper sounded decidedly annoyed:

"The first Day of February 1661. All we whose names are here under written doe hereby Ingage our selves that we will give freely towards the maintainens of the widdow croker so much Indian corne for a yeare beginning at the first of february 1661 and to the end of february 1662 provided we may be no more troubled with her more than the rent of the hous and that there be a person appointed to receive it and to look to it and her that it may not be wasted, vis so much corn as follows."

Fifteen persons signed this agreement, giving from one to three bushels, thirty-six and a half in all. As corn was much used for barter, I suppose the person in charge would trade it off for things she needed, as the poor woman certainly could not live on just corn.

We all know that geese are wonderful watch dogs, but I had not realized that they

By Kate W. Strong

would attack other creatures. However I find that in Huntington in the early days it was forbidden to keep geese because they drove the sheep off the streets and into the woods where the wolves might get them.

In February 1695 Suscane-man (alias Runasuck, Indian) and chief Proprietor of the Indian lands at Hempstead Harbor, sold to Gervis Mudg of Muskeeto Cove certain lands in Oyster Bay for twenty

coe was mistaken for Glen Cove which later was accepted by acclamation."

Miss Flint also tells the tale of one of Long Island's haunted houses. It was built on Fort Neck by Major Thomas Jones, hero of the Boyne, commissioned buccaneer; later high sheriff of Queens County. The land had come to him, as his wife Free-love Townsend's dowry from her father. On Fort Neck Jones built "a faire brick mansion which stood until 1837."

Long known as The Pirates House, it was reputed to be haunted. Tradition says that "as Major Jones lay on his death bed, a great black bird hovered above. As the breath ceased the bird made its exit through the western wall of the house. All efforts to close the hole were unavailing, it being always reopened at night by some mysterious power."

All Long Island shared interest in the French and Indian War. The New York Gazette of September 1755 stated:

"The people of Suffolk County sent 50 head of fat cattle to Gen. Johnson in camp at Lake George. The women of the county, ever good on such occasions, are knitting several large bags of stockings and mittens to be sent to the poorer soldiers in garrison at Fort William Henry and Fort Edward."

There I think my basket of tales is full enough for this time, and I will come back from out of the past.

Once again I'm privileged to renew my subscription to the Forum. I am sure 1950's issues will bring us the same interesting reading, living up to its reputation of the past.

I sincerely hope its circulation increases as its reputation has.

(Miss) Elizabeth Brown,
East Hampton



AN EARLY PICTURE OF INDIAN CORN

pounds for a period of FIVE HUNDRED YEARS, and every year, if demanded on the 28th day of september, Gervis Mudg or heirs were to pay to the said, Indian or his descendants one peck of good apples. I wonder how long they kept it up.

Miss Flint gives the following account of the meeting in 1834 when the name Musquito Cove was changed to Glen Cove:

"At the meeting to consider the adoption of a new name, P e m b r o k e, Circassia, and Glencoe were the most favored of the names proposed. Glen-

Southold's Custer Institute

Continued from page 43

community built the structure as it stands today. It was a product of the minds, hearts and hands of the members and some of the townspeople.

In the observatory under a 22 foot dome, constructed by a member, stands the 6 inch Clark Refracting Telescope; 104 inches focal length. On a midway landing, transparencies of star clusters, of whirl-pool nebulae, of the moon, can be viewed. Exhibits, geological, mineralogical, astronomical, are placed against the curved walls. In the first floor's circular room, a good number of scientific books form an excellent library.

The Stokes Hall, used for lectures and exhibits, holds as many as two hundred people. The members usually give the talks, each member presenting a subject peculiar to his own interest. There are, however, guest speakers of outside world renown often before the lectern. W. H. Barton, late curator of the Hayden Planetarium; Dr. Robert W. Wood,

Physics Professor Emeritus of Johns Hopkins; Dr. Albert D. Stern, inventor of the sound recorder used by the Army and Navy during the war; Dr. Hugh H. Bennett of the Department of Agriculture; H. H. Beveridge of the Radio

Corporation of America; John O'Neill, Science Editor of The New York Herald Tribune, and others eminent in scientific fields, have come to speak before the Institute and the community, invited to share these meetings. Townspeople

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Member F. D. I. C.

have filled the hall many times. Thus one of the chief aims of the Institute has been carried out—service to the community.

The members themselves now limited to the number of fifty, meet, however, for bi-monthly Saturday night talks in the original room of the building, the intimate gathering place for round table discussions, for chats by the hearth, for the refreshment hour at the end of evening sessions. Its walls hold a series of micro-photographic prints of minute plankton and crustaceans, and photographs of the aurora of September 18, 1941, work of members; photographs of the Fitz optical achievements (the late Harry Fitz, maker of the Fitz lens, was a Custer member). An exhibit of semi-precious stones and an optical glass exhibit show the thorough interest and work of the individual members. In this room classes have met for astronomy, photography, signalling, marine code, home mechanics. An excellent course in celestial navigation was given during the war to the boys going into the armed forces.

After one has had a look-in at the Custer kitchen with its clam chowder kettles and coffee pot at attention, he believes he has gone over the Institute and knows about it. Not so. There is yet the basement, one of the most interesting and vital parts of the building. Two dark rooms with running water are the scene of the finales of camera work. Along a corridor lies the polar telescope (from the Elmer telescopes) waiting at some time to be placed on a stanchion outside. Likewise a Zeiss camera awaits its outside placement. There is a long low room devoted to the important grinding of optical lenses. Six newly acquired lens grinding and polishing machines with testing apparatus are stationed in this room. Right here, the community vision of the Institute must be stressed. It is the hope to create interest in the young

people of the town to grind their own lenses and make their own telescopes. The result may be far reaching. In no other science is the work of the amateur so valuable as it is in astronomy.

At the base of the observatory, a huge stanchion has been constructed, solid, unshakeable which extends right to the mount of the telescope a'oft. Members worked out very cleverly the intricate apparatus which drives the telescope when set for sky-mapping. They also made the proper hook-up with Washington for sidereal time. A person standing in the obser-



Charles W. Elmer

vatory basement perceives the substantial foundation, the support it gives to the dome above, the dome which opens to the arcs of the stars; and he feels that it is symbolic or closely related to the building of Custer Institute in relation to its community.

On August 20th, 1949 the major event of Custer Institute's summer season occurred for members and the public. Talks on photography and astro-photography were given by members. The camera club of the Institute put on its exhibition of photography. The basement with its completed apparatus was on view. On the lawn at the rear a member explained the Ross-Fecker camera for sky-mapping, one of the most valuable assets of the Institute. The construc-

tion of the properly made base, the setting and orientation of the camera were the last big jobs accomplished during the summer. Members giving every ounce of strength and leisure time outside working hours, under a blazing sun, had done this, for the joy of it, for their community; significant again of the meaning of Custer Institute.

On Dec. 17, 1949, Charles W. Elmer gave his traditional Christmas talk in the Stokes Memorial hall. His subject this year was "The Stars in Their Courses." He talked of astronomy, and he talked of the spirit of God, the two being inter-related. "He who is an astronomer can see, with clarified vision, God."

A listener in the audience thought of the many times he had dropped in at the Institute to hear a competent instructor teach young people how to enjoy the heavens. He remembered the class in astronomy which had further opened his mind and his eyes to something far greater than himself. He remembered the influence of Charles Elmer and his wife, and the continuing inspiration of Mr. Elmer through the years. The December 17th evening held for him a quality intangible in feeling. It seemed to be wrought out of all that Custer Institute was; it had started from scratch, had gone through its difficulties and surmounted them, had held together staunchly through the years, had now a great vision for the future. It could serve as a model for many other institutes of like nature which would grow as it had out of a sincere yearning for knowledge. There was a thoroughly sound and noble meaning to Custer Institute. Southold possessed something of intrinsic, rare value.

(Note: Courses in Astronomy for the public, were started in January of this year, meeting every other Friday evening under the instruction of Hugh J. Stern, Charles W. Elmer, Thomas A. Stacy and L. C. Eichner.)

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Forum

Continued From Page 44

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The actual compilation and indexing are the work of Miss Marguerite V. Doggett, Librarian of the Long Island Collection, who has been engaged in the project, between her usual duties, for several years. To give an idea of the extent of Miss Doggett's work we reprint her Foreword as follows:

"Capitalization of the first word only in titles follows library usage. Articles on the verse of the front cover and the last pages of each month, when of sufficient length and importance have been brought out under the author and subject; minor articles, under subject only.

"Double entries are used for artists, authors, houses and schools. All are entered under the subject. Artists and authors are entered under their *individual names*. Houses and schools are entered under their *names* and also under the *place*. For brevity, names of places are grouped under *Names*, *Geographical*, when the origin of the name has been given.

"Individual ships have been entered under the general heading *Ships*.

"Genealogy is listed under the family name as *Ackerly family*. This type of entry may include considerable material or just a person's surname.

"Portraits used more than once, if the same, are given one entry; if different, more entries. Similar treatment is given in the case of illustrations."

With each entry is given the volume number and page number of the Forum, so that the desired information may be obtained almost instantly. With this Index at hand the Long Island Forum, which has been used to some extent in the island's schools, will prove to be even more useful, especially in the social studies classes. The subject, for instance, of the Long Island Indians which has been thoroughly covered in many Forum articles by different authors, becomes more readily accessible by use of the Index.

* * *

Long Island Florida Cracker

We have received a pleasant call from your contributing editor, Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood, and his son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. John Russell, who are living in a very commodious and finely equipped trailer at Clearwater, about 22 miles north of here. Other Long Island visitors were Mr. and

Continued on next page

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Forum

Continued From Page 50

Mrs. Paul Erhardt of Montauk, Mr. and Mrs. Lyle Tuthill of Orient, Mrs. Bess Osborn Ham, formerly of Sag Harbor and East Hampton.

The Woods seem to be enjoying the beautiful balmy weather we are having—no snow to shovel, no wood to cut and split, no heavy boots and clothes to lug around, no anti-freeze juice in the radiator.

Recently I have been catching some real Long Island seabass and do they taste good! Heretofore we have caught an occasional one but now the inside rock and coral bottoms are plentifully supplied with them. Caught one last week that weighed 3½ pounds.

Northern winter visitors are arriving here in crowds and one funny thing we Florida crackers get is a good laugh at so many oldsters, while the early mornings are a bit cool, wearing overcoats with collars turned up and going about bareheaded and coughing and sneezing. If they had sufficient hair on their heads it would be excusable.

This county, Pinellas, has the greatest number of Northerners of all Florida counties. We are proud of this fact and cheerfully invite more to come and live among us damnyanks and enjoy the Sunshine State.

John Oakley Ireland,
Gulfport, Fla.

Mr. Ireland, a native born Long Islander, has been a Florida cracker for many years and a Forum reader for more than ten.

Gildersleeve Data

Thanks for running my letter in the Forum. My sister, Virginia C. Gildersleeve, Dean Emeritus of Barnard College, gets a lot of publicity, but I seldom get any at all. Just to keep the record straight I have checked some dates.

Richard Gildersleeve 1st, bought "patent rights" from Richard Carman in 1654. (Carman had acquired these "rights" from the Indians before the "Hempstead" settlement was made.)

My g.g.grandfather Henry Gildersleeve 1st, left L. I. with his wife Mary Hall and their children in 1769, to settle in Clinton, Dutchess Co., N. Y. This was just 100 years before I was born in 1869 in New York.

Mary Hall was the g.g.granddaughter of John Smith Rock, Jr. and the late Valentine W. Smith

Continued next column

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and I used to have fun tracing our relationship.

Alger C. Gildersleeve,

Far Rockaway

* * *

Island's Wild Swans

I am wondering if the wild swans now so plentiful in all parts of Long Island owe their origin to the eight birds which Albert Herter released on Georgia Pond at East Hampton away back in 1914. That same summer the famous actor John Drew likewise released a pair of swan on nearby Town Pond and these joined the Georgia contingent before cold weather. This flock is known to have shown an increase within the year and according to some sources these fowl were the first to breed on Long Island.

G.E.W.,

New York

Swan were breeding on the lake

Continued on next page

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Long Island Forum Index

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Forum

Continued From Page 51

at Baldwin some years before 1914, Prospect Park in Brooklyn and, we believe, a number of other places on the island had their breeding swans long before that year.

For several years the Forum was sent to us by a dear friend who has died. We would miss the Forum very much so please enter our subscription direct. We liked very much the article, The Tree of Life Window, by Julian Denton Smith, in the January number. That is our church.

Mrs. Earl E. Albright,
Inwood, L. I.

The Forum is very interesting and I would not do without it. Louis T. Vail, White Plains, N. Y. (Mr. Vail is one of the State's leading genealogists.)

Long Islanders will be pleased to hear that Rod Hendrickson is again on the air—station WOR at 12:15 (afternoon) every Tue day and Thursday.

One of my patients left a copy of your September issue with me. He knew that my sister, who has been dead for some years, was a Mrs. L'Honniedieu, and that I would be interested in the article on "Ezra".

My reaction is to send you this order for subscription beginning with the September issue to my brother-in-law, William Perryn L'Honniedieu, 31 Manor Drive, Piedmont, California.

Mr. L'Honniedieu was born and raised in Islip, and I would like to send this to him with my compliments. I am sure he will enjoy the Forum.

Alfred C. Young, D.D.S.,
121 University Place,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Continued on page 57

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Island's Part in World Aviation

PART VI

PRESTON R. BASSETT

*President, Sperry Gyroscope Company
President, Nassau County Historical Society*

The out-standing event of the year 1923 was the first non-stop flight across the continent. On May 2nd, Lieut. J. A. Macready and Lieut. O. Kelly took off from Mitchel Field in a large single-engine Fokker airplane, the T-2, with a heavy load of gas and headed west. They flew all through that night and twenty-six hours and fifty minutes later they landed in San Diego, California. This was an important milestone in the history of transcontinental flight.

The record, however, did not stand for long. In the early dawn of June 23, 1924, one of the longest days of the year, Lieut. Russell Maughan took off from Mitchel Field in a Curtiss pursuit plane which had been built and especially groomed at the Garden City Curtiss plant. He raced the sun across the continent and landed at San Francisco in the late twilight of the same day. The elapsed time was 21 hours and 44 minutes. The flight was known as the Dawn-to-Dusk flight.

In 1925 the Pulitzer Trophy Race was again held at Mitchel Field. Lieut. Cyrus Bettis flew the latest Garden City product, a new Curtiss racing plane, and set a new world's record at 249 miles per hour. So by watching Mitchel Field during these few years, we have seen speed, range and endurance climb to a point where the airplane had truly become efficient.

Mitchel Field, however, settled down after 1925 to a routine Army life, with regular and un-petacular flying. So we must seek some other place to swing the spotlight.

Things had been quite normal during these years at Roosevelt Field. Schools and flying services were prospering. New and better types of planes had come along, but there was no outstanding news. Roosevelt Field had become just another local field with no prospects for world fame. But along in the Fall of 1926, Capt. Rene Fomey, the brilliant French war ace, came to Roosevelt Field with a Sikorsky biplane and his crew of three. He announced his plan to fly non-stop to Paris in an attempt to win the almost forgotten Orteig prize. On September 15th, with a very heavy load of gas, the attempt was made. The plane was too heavy. It rared down the runway but could not get off; it crashed at the far end and burst into flames. Capt. Fomey and Lieut. Curtin were saved, but the other two crew members were killed.

Even though this attempt failed, it called attention to the fact that the non-stop transatlantic flight, though still a gamble, was no longer a fantastic idea. Plans were being hatched on both sides of the Atlantic. In Paris, Capt. Charles Nungesser and Capt. F. Coli, two famous French war aces, were preparing carefully for an attempt from Paris to New York.

At Roosevelt Field, Commander Byrd, having just successfully flown over the North Pole, was preparing his big tri-motor airplane, the *America*. He had gathered a fine crew and his preparations were thorough and painstaking. Clarence Chamberlin

Continued From Page 54

Designed For Travel

With a trip in the offing, if travelling light is an essential, co-ordination of the clothes to be taken along becomes a necessity. But even a woman who likes the maximum load of luggage, can't go wrong with a costume like the one Gisela Madrid models here.

Miss Madrid, of Havana, Cuba, who is in New York studying design at the Trap-hagen School of Fashion, created this versatile suit as the



mainstay of a portable wardrobe. For a trip to Europe, it will be ideal in the cooler temperatures of England and the Scandinavian countries, and wearable in its various parts in the warmer climates.

The suit of beige worsted crepe has a hip-length jacket as well as the waistcoat shown, and the light-weight, rich-toned cocoa brown wool cape can be worn over either combination. Without the cape, the waistcoat costume, with its white silk shirt, is smart for casual wear; the suit, complete with jacket and a dressy blouse and accessories, can be worn for occasions such as luncheons and cocktails. By

selecting dresses that harmonize with the color of the cape, it serves also as a wrap and is easier to pack than a coat when not in use.

As the winner of the Ana Maria Borrero Scholarship for study abroad, which is awarded in Havana each year to an outstanding young Cuban woman, New York was the city and Traphagen the school chosen for Miss Madrid by the scholarship's administrative board as offering the best in fashion training today. She plans to return to Havana to start her career.

Other Holly Trees

I was interested in reading about that large holly tree in Southampton, and I am wondering how old a tree it may be.

At a place called Deep Hole, in Calverton, there is a holly tree which was planted by a Mr. Lewis Young who was an uncle of my Grandfather, Benjamin F. Young, who was born in 1815. I do not know what year Lewis Young was born, but I have been told he set out the tree in his door yard. I have seen it and I know it is quite large. I have one in my own yard here on Sound Avenue, which is red with berries, which is about twelve years old.

Mrs. Mary E. Fuller,
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Island's Part in World Aviation

Continued on Page 53

was also at Roosevelt Field experimenting with a new Wright-powered Bellanca which was owned by Mr. Charles Levine. Chamberlin and Bert Acosta took this plane up from Roosevelt Field one Spring day to fly back and forth over Long Island until the gas ran out. It was two days later that they landed again at Roosevelt Field with the world's endurance record of 51 hours and 11 minutes. This performance convinced Mr. Levine that his Bellanca, *Miss Columbia*, could win the Orteig prize, so he had Chamberlin make preparations for the great trial.

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Washington on Long Island

CONCLUDED FROM LAST MONTH

On Wednesday morning, April 21, at about 8 o'clock, Washington's party proceeded to South Hempstead (now Hempstead) passing the south edge of the Hempstead Plains, an area at that time without trees or shrubs, excepting some fruit trees of which he wrote, "do not thrive well". His diary continues, "We baited in South Hempstead (10 miles from Jamaica) at the house of one Simmond's, a tavern, now of private entertainment for money."

Until a few years ago it was believed that Washington referred to the Sammis tavern which stood on the northeast corner of Fulton and Main streets until demolished in 1929. Research, however shows that in 1790 a building on the diagonally opposite corner from the Sammis house was known as Simmonson's. Most students now believe that it was this latter house that Washington referred to.

After the horses were fed and watered at Hempstead, the party passed St. George's Church and turned into what is now Greenwich street. A five-mile drive brought them to the South road (Merrick road) on which for the rest of that day, they were in sight of the "sea".

They dined at "one Ketchums which had also been a public house but, now a private one, received pay for what it furnished" and was "a very neat and decent one." It is said that the President presented a gold ring to a little girl in the Ketcham family. The marker and memorial elm at Merrick road and Deauville boulevard, just east of Amityville, are a few hundred feet west of where the Ketcham house actually stood.

That day's drive ended at the home of Squire Thompson (Sagtikos Manor in West

By Leslie Edhoff

Islip) which furnished lodging and meals for pay. In this house may still be seen the room in which Washington slept and the bed and furniture of that occasion. Leaving here about 8:00 o'clock Thursday morning, the party traveled to "one Greens distant 11 miles", on the Old South road (Montauk highway) at West Sayville. This typical colonial farmhouse is now owned and occupied by John Pettir Green Bates, a descendant of "one Green" referred to in Washington's diary.

The next stop was at Hart's tavern, Patchogue, the site of which is marked by an inscribed stone and an elm tree. To this point from Hempstead Washington described the soil as more and more sandy and less productive. From Patchogue they turned northward and, escorted by local citizens, passed through Coram, thence along the winding Old Town road to Setauket where the third day's drive ended at the tavern of Captain Austin Roe, described by Washington as "tolerably decent" and with "obliging people in it."

The area between Patchogue and Coram he described as covered with low scrubby oaks and ill thriven pines of about two feet in height, the land becoming more fertile and productive from Coram to Setauket. The site of Roe's tavern is at the corner of Main street and Bayview avenue, in Setauket. The tavern has been moved to a hilltop location on Old Post road, not far from the original location. Its present site, beautifully landscaped, is owned and occupied by the author Wallace Irwin and his wife who showed this writer the old taproom in which Washington's spies met during the Revolution.

In another room, over the

fireplace, is a painting by son Donald Irwin, depicting the arrival of Washington in 1790. Mrs. Irwin explained that as the party was nearing the tavern a negro servant went to notify Captain Roe who was down at the shore getting fresh seafood for the Presidential meal. Hastily riding back to greet his former Commander-in-chief for whom he had carried many secret messages during the war, in dismounting at the tavern Roe's foot caught in the stirrup and he fell to the ground, breaking a leg. The painting shows this mishap.

On Friday morning, April 23, Washington and party bid goodbye to Setauket and drove to Smithtown Branch where at the Widow Blydenburgh's tavern they "baited the horses." It was a "decent house" and stood at the junction of North Country and Middle Country roads, now marked by a boulder and plaque showing a picture of the tavern.

The same day they reached Huntington where dinner was served at the Widow Platt's, opposite the village green. At the Platt table were 15 persons whom Washington entertained as though host. The

Continued on next page



Washington Tavern, Roslyn

Island's Part in World Aviation

Continued from Page 54

With so much stirring on both sides of the Atlantic, public interest in the rivalry and the preparations was rising to a high pitch. The month of May, 1927, brought real drama, probably the greatest in the history of aviation. On May 7th, Nungesser and Gali took off from Le Bourget, Paris, in their *White Bird* and started across the ocean. There were days of suspense, but no report of the flyers. Floyd Bennett flew from Roosevelt Field to Newfoundland and searched the sea for several days, but no trace of the French flyers was ever found.

At Roosevelt Field, test flights and final preparations were being made with both the *America* and *Miss Columbia*. On May 10th, however, there was unexpected news. A young airmail pilot by the name of Charles A. Lindbergh was flying eastward from San Diego, California, in a new Ryan monoplane named *The Spirit of St. Louis*. Lindbergh stopped at St. Louis overnight so that his sponsors might have a look at his shiny new ship. Then he flew on and landed at Roosevelt Field on the evening of May 12th. He modestly announced that he was going to fly on to Paris. With no crew or mechanics, he quietly checked over his airplane, spent the nights in the nearby Garden City Hotel, and kept in daily, almost hourly touch with Dr. Kimball, the New York City weather man. For several days the reports were very bad, but on May 19th, even though it was raining hard, Lindbergh learned from Dr. Kimball that the weather over the Atlantic was improving. With no hesitation Lindbergh decided to go even though Dr. Kimball did not recommend it. He was at the field before day-

Continued on Page 57

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Washington on Long Island

Continued from Page 55

meal consisted of "oysters, baked striped bass, a monster round of beef, stuffed veal, roast turkey, chicken pie with all the vegetables of the season and a variety of preserves." Later they visited the remains of Fort Franklin and the old burying ground.

By evening of the same day the party reached Mr. Youngs' at Oyster Bay. "Private and very neat," here they were cared for overnight. This house still stands opposite Youngs' family burying ground, now a memorial cemetery in which is the grave of President Theodore Roosevelt. Before six o'clock on the morning of Saturday, April 24, the party breakfasted in Roslyn at Henry Onderdonk's, now the Washington tavern.

Onderdonk showed Washington his grist and paper mills and the President himself turned out a sheet of paper. From Roslyn they drove to Flushing, dined briefly and before sundown had crossed the East river, having spent five days and four nights on this final visit of George Washington to Long Island.

People from the First Presbyterian Church of Far Rockaway are delighted with the article of Julian D. Smith on our "Tree of Life" Window. (Miss) Elizabeth Paterson, Hewlett, L. I.

SPERRY

Great Neck

Long Island

Island's Part in World Aviation

Continued from Page 52

break. It was overcast and still raining; the field was soaking wet. The plane was towed to the extreme west end of the field and at 7:52 A. M. he took off into the gray eastern sky. Somehow the whole setting of the unknown youngster taking off alone with so much confidence and so little show where war aces and famous pilots had failed and where others were still busy with their elaborate preparations, electrified the world. There were hours of charged suspense and then the news, Lindbergh had landed at Le Bourget Airport after 33 hours 30 minutes of flying. He was greeted by a huge and wildly enthusiastic crowd. In the succeeding days he was cheered and feted and written about until even the statesmen of Europe and America considered it a phenomenon. The United States Government rose to the occasion when President Coolidge ordered the cruiser *USS Memphis* to bring the flyer home in triumph. The reverberations of Lindbergh's flight lasted several years and had a tremendous effect in advancing aviation.

Back at Roosevelt Field, Chamberlin and Byrd, disappointed, had to modify their plans. Neither one abandoned his project, however. Chamberlin and Levine made arrangements to fly to an unnamed destination (later found to be Berlin). On June 4th the *Miss Columbia* took off from the same runway that Lindbergh had used and left every one guessing as to where they would land. Two days later the news came that they had crossed the Atlantic safely, but had had to make a forced landing in Germany at Eilsleben when they ran out of gas. They had covered, however, 3941 miles in 42 hours and 45 minutes, a world record for distance which stood for some years.

Finally, on June 29, 1927, Commander Byrd, after being delayed both by hard luck and very thorough testing, was ready to start with the *America*. He had as crew Bert Acosta, Bernt Balchen and Lieut. Noville. At 5:30 A. M. they took off, but hard luck still pursued them; they had fogs and bad weather all of the way. They could not find Le Bourget and finally landed in the water just off the coast of France at Ver-sur-Mer after 42 hours in the air.

Before the end of this great year, Roosevelt Field launched one more attempt at transatlantic flying. On October 10th, George Haldeman and Ruth Elder took off in a Stinson monoplane. They encountered storms and finally came down in the ocean 360 miles from the Azores. They were rescued by a Dutch oil tanker.

To be continued

Forum

Continued From Page 52

I have enjoyed every copy of the Forum and seldom get one that does not have an article or picture that recalls memories of happy times spent in Greenport, Mattituck, Riverhead, etc., also the years in which I lived in Commack and visited Huntington, Northport, Smithtown, Brentwood, Bay Shore and Islip. I enjoy Dr. Wood's articles so much that I feel that I know him.

Mrs. C. J. Southard,
1492 Schuyler Road,
Toledo 12, Ohio.

* * *

Early Way of Life

A thing that strikes me in what I read about the early days on Long Island was the low standard of living. Most men who farmed wore knee breeches of soiled leather, woolen stockings and shoes made of deer hide, shaped like Indian moccasins, with no heels and with very hard soles. They were laced with leather thongs. They wore soft leather coats which were roomy and reached halfway to the knees. They had immense pockets and large clumsy wooden buttons. Shirts were of coarse gray cloth and hats were often of rabbit skin with the fur still on.

Houses were usually unpainted. They were not of the log variety on Long Island. In the public tavern a quart of beer cost twopence, the price being fixed by law. They called it the "ordinary" and it could sell beer, cider and light wines but no sack—a strong drink imported from Europe. A customer could buy only one quart of beer between meals but as much as he desired when eating.

Few streets were named in the early days. They gradually acquired a name from usage, such as River road, Spring street, or Terry's, which led to Terry's farm. Where signs were used on a business place they were usually a picture descriptive of the business, as few people could read. Furniture was unpainted but was smoothed and polished. The reason the colonists made most of their furniture was that it was too bulky to be imported reasonably.

A large part of imported goods were brought by the captain and crew of a ship and sold by them personally. Among such things were fabrics, household implements, tools, glass windowpanes, blankets, looking glasses, writing paper, pewter dishes, liquor and rare foods such as nutmegs and ginger. Ships usually took from five to ten weeks

Continued on back cover

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BOOKS

These items for Long Island students, libraries and collectors are now available. For particulars address the Long Island Forum.

History Society Sons of the Revolution, including ancestral line of founders, 1899, 197p. Needs binding.

Old New York. (Reminiscences 1820-80), Wm. E. Dodge, 1880, 59p.

Reminiscences of Old New Utrecht and Gowanus, by Mrs. Bleecker Bangs, 1912, 194p.

Crusader in Crinoline. Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Forrest Wilson, 1941, 706p.

Colonial Hempstead. Bernie Schultz, 1937, 392p.

Yaphank As It Is and Was. L. Beecher Homan, 1875, 214p. Needs rebinding. Last page torn.

The Country Printer, New York State 1785-1820, Milton W. Hamilton, 1936, 360p.

Yankees and Yorkers, Dixon Ryan Fox, 1940, 237p.

Huntington Babylon Town History. Romanah Sammis, 1937, 296p. Re-introducing Our Signers. Raymond E. Addis, 1940, 132p.

Looking Backward (In and around Smithtown) J. E. Handshaw, 1925, 332p.

Valentine's Manual of Old New York. Henry Collins Brown, 1927, 392p.

History of Long Island, Benjamin F. Thompson, 3 vols. 1918, 3d and final edition.

Inns and Outs. Julius Keller of Canoe Place, 1939, 250p.

Boyd's Directory of Long Island 1864-5, 332p. Four binding.

Brooklyn Village 1816-1834. Ralph Foster Weld, 1938, 262p. Foreword by Dixon Ryan Fox.

Drivers Up. The Story of American Harness Racing. Dwight Akers, 1938, 367p.

Select Patents of New York Towns. Frederick Van Wyck, 1938, 180p.

Long Island Colonial Patents. Frederick Van Wyck, 1935, 175p.

The Commodore's Story. Ralph Middleton Munroe and Vincent Gilpin, 1930, 378p.

The Trial of Capt. Wm. Kidd. Don C. Seitz. Limited edition 650, 1936, 254p.

Salt Water Fishing Tackle. Harlan Major, 1939, 284p.

The Whale Fishery on Long Island. Harry D. Sleight, 1931, 232p.

The Historical Significance of Nassau County, L. I., N.Y. Jesse Merritt, 1941. Only 90 printed.

The Sashores. Parado. Muriel Lewin Guberlet, 1942, 197p.

Whitaker's Southold. Rev. Esber Whitaker. Edited by Rev. Chas. E. Craven, 1931, 194p.

Spin Your Globe to Long Island. Frederick Simms. (Reprinted from National Geographic) 1940.

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Pamphlets by the Forum

First Train to Greenport, 1844, by Dr. Clarence A. Wood, for more than 40 years secretary to Judges of the Court of Appeals. 50 cents.

History of the Storms and Gales on Long Island, by Osborn Shaw, Official Historian, Town of Brookhaven; *The Hurricane of 1938*, by Dorothy Quick, Poetess and Novelist. Limited, numbered edition. Out of print.

History of Setauket Presbyterian Church, by Kate W. Strong, with introduction by the Rev. Frank M. Kerr, Hempstead. Limited number edition of 200. Sold by Miss Strong, Setauket, L. I. 50 cents.

The Talented Mount Brothers, by Jacqueline Overton, author of "Long Island's Story" and Librarian of the Children's Library, Westbury, with introduction by Harry Peters, art collector, critic, author and lecturer. Limited numbered edition of 500. Sold by author, 50 cents.

Long Island Whaling, by Nathaniel R. Howell, founder of Historically Minded Group. Sold by author, East Islip, L. I. 50 cents.

David Frothingham, Pioneer Editor, by Nancy Boyd Willey. For sale by Mrs. M. M. Willey, L. I. Herald House, Sag Harbor. 50 cents.

Long Island's First Italian, 1639, by Rene A. Pyke, former New York State Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets. 50 cents.

Streamlining a County Welfare Service, by Edwin W. Wallace, Commissioner Public Welfare, Nassau County. 25 cents.

To Florida and Back from Long Island (in 29-Foot Fishing Skiff), by Captain Charles Saydam, Jr., off-shore fisherman extraordinary. 50 cents.

Ezra L'Hommiedieu, Island Statesman, by Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood. A biographical sketch of Southold Town's famous native son "Father of the Board of Regents". One Dollar.

Birthplace of John Howard Payne, by Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood, Contributing Editor Long Island Forum. A comprehensive presentation of conclusive proof that the author of "Home, Sweet Home" was born in New York City. Limited edition. One Dollar.

A Small Bit of Trip to Florida (Winter of 1917-18), by Captain Charles Saydam, Jr. 50 cents.

History of Patchogue Congregational Church, by Frank Overton, M.D. 50 cents.

True Tales from the early days of Long Island, as told by Kate W. Strong, based on records, documents and other data in her private collection. 11 Pamphlets, each one containing a number of Miss Strong's original stories, reprinted from the Long Island Forum. For particulars address Miss Kate W. Strong, The Cedars, Setauket, L. I.

Earliest English Schools on Long Island, by Nathaniel R. Howell, Town Historian Islip, Councillor Suffolk County Historical Society, Leader Historically Minded Group. Sold by the author, East Islip, N. Y., postpaid 50 cents.

The Pottery at Huntington, by Romanah Sammis, Official Historian, Town of Huntington. For sale by Huntington Historical Society. 25 cents.

Distribution of Wild Orchids on Long Island by Roy Latham, well known authority. Limited, numbered edition. Sold by author, Orient, L. I. 50 cents.

Five Thousand Years of Relief, by Edwin W. Wallace, Commissioner Public Welfare, Nassau County; President, New York Association of Public Welfare Officials. Out of print.

Tales of An Island and Its People, by Dr. Clarence A. Wood. A group of seven sketches on Long Island's famous horses and horsemen of yesteryear, and other historical subjects. 50 cents.

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Forum

Continued From Page 57

between here and Europe and there was little attempt at schedule. If some important person wasn't ready, the captain would sometimes wait for days.

In the early times skilled workers received two shillings a day or 14 pence if they lived with the boss. Unskilled labor received 1½ shillings. Boys became apprentices at 14 and served seven years without pay. Indentured servants who had to work off debts (usually their heat fare to America) were virtual slaves. Some were fitted with iron collars rivetted on so they couldn't escape.

The land system on which Long Island towns were founded started usually with a grant from the King or one of his patentees such as the Earl of Stirling and later the Duke of York. The grant went to a company or other group which was the nucleus of a town. This group allotted plots to original settlers and kept a nestegg which could be allotted later. The settlers in turn could sell individually what they could not need. This system ended, however, around 1700 and soon thereafter land auction sales became the vogue. This led to wild speculation, but it also made a live market and did much to further develop the island.

In the case of a manor grant to some favored individual, he became supreme and unanswerable to the local town government. During the earliest years, he received many benefits from the town but paid it no taxes. When a manor became a part of the town, however, as all eventually did, it began paying taxes. The manor was a real threat to the democratic way of life which the towns inaugurated.

J. R. Partington.

The second item of the Corydon M. Johnson portfolio of Long Island scenes, issued as a holiday greeting, portrays Walt Whitman as a young self-employed printer issuing *The Long Islander* in 1829, and also his birthplace at West Hills. An explanatory note by Nassau Official Historian Jesse Merritt, together with an excerpt from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* rounds out a truly distinctive work of art. Whitman's portrait is by Donato Celenzano.

I enjoy your recordings from two to three hundred years ago. What a change in our United States during the latter part of that time. Daniel S. Farrar, Saint Joseph, Louisiana.

I really enjoy the Forum. Raymond L. Disch, M.D., Lynbrook.

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